

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 4 and 7 as follows, wherein insertions are underlined and deletions are indicated with strikethrough or double brackets. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A ride plate positioning mechanism for a personal watercraft having a craft body, an engine and a jet propeller driven by said engine, such that said personal watercraft is capable of being propelled by jet water generated by said jet propeller,

said ride plate positioning mechanism comprising:

a removable ride plate for defining a bottom portion of a stern of said craft body, said ride plate comprising a pair of integrally formed left and right positioning projections projecting upwardly at a front portion of said ride plate, said positioning projections having vertically oriented front faces for contacting said craft body; and

a pair of left and right tab stops formed in a hull of said craft body of said watercraft, ~~for~~ said pair of tab stops contacting the vertically oriented front faces of said positioning projections when the ride plate is installed on said craft body.

2. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 1, wherein the ride plate further comprises an elevated arresting member extending outwardly at the front end thereof, for stabilizing placement on a support piece.

3. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 2, wherein the elevated arresting member is narrower than the widest part of said ride plate.

4. (Currently amended) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim ~~[[4]]~~ 1, wherein

said craft body comprises a stator and a dependent ridge which extends downwardly adjacent said stator, and wherein said ~~projecting tabs~~ positioning projections fit nestingly between said ~~tap~~ tab stops and said dependent ridge.

5. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 1, wherein said ride plate includes side edge portions which are raised up in relation to adjoining portions of said ride plate.

6. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 5, wherein said craft body has an opening formed in said bottom portion of said stern with a pair of shallow, spaced apart stepped recesses formed at the sides of said opening to receive said side edge portions of said ride plate.

7. (Currently Amended) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 1, wherein said positioning projections have flattened front faces ~~which are substantially vertically oriented~~.

8. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 1, wherein said positioning projections are constructed and arranged to have a substantially rectangular horizontal cross-sectional shape.

9. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 1, wherein said ride plate further comprises at least one raised rib extending transversely across an upper surface thereof behind said positioning projections.

10. (Original) The ride plate positioning mechanism of claim 9, wherein said ride plate has a plurality of spaced-apart raised ribs on said upper surface thereof.

11. (Withdrawn) A method of aligning a removable ride plate with a stern of a personal watercraft, comprising the steps of:

placing opposed front corners of said ride plate between opposed stepped recesses formed in a bottom surface of a stern of said watercraft,

sliding said ride plate forwardly until a pair of integrally formed left and right positioning projections on an upper front portion of said ride plate contact a pair of left and right tab stops formed in said watercraft stern.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11, further comprising a step of pivotally moving said ride plate until the side edges thereof fit into said stepped recesses.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11, further comprising a step of attaching said ride plate to said watercraft body with fasteners.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 11, wherein said watercraft stern comprises a substantially vertical transverse wall face, and wherein said tab stops are formed as part of said substantially vertical transverse wall face.